

# **Analysis of Waitlist Member Response to Winter Test Launch Release**

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## **Background**

Under the current non-commercial permit system, total river trips within the secondary season (October 16 through April 15) can never exceed 5 launches per week. However, because the CRMP allocation for private trips in this time period is limited to 10,530 user-days, each year many of these launch dates need to go unused. Typically almost all of the user-day allocation is used up by people choosing dates in the “shoulder season” (the dates people think will be the warmest). The usual result is that little to no launches take place in December, January, and February.

In 1998, park managers requested and obtained authorization from the superintendent to conduct a one-year *Winter Test Launch Release* to determine 1) if current waiting list participants were interested in winter dates, 2) if winter use could be responsibly increased to a higher, but environmentally sustainable level, and, 3) if demand for winter dates was low, could the park implement a fair and equitable way for interested parties to move from behind uninterested waiting list participants to use these dates. Toward this end the River Office was authorized to add winter launches whenever less than 3 private launches were already scheduled within a week and ignore the user-day limit for this test period.

In 1999 park managers obtained permission to continue the test for an additional 3 years so more complete data could be gathered and later compiled regarding demand for winter dates and the overall effects of increasing secondary season launches. The last season for the program was winter of 2001-2002. Now, with four years of data at hand, we can deduce much about the effects and demand for increased winter launches. We believe this analysis can be useful within the current Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) planning process.

## Availability of Launches

A total of 153 launches were offered over the course of the four-year program. 138 launches, or 90% of the total, were claimed. The annual breakdown is illustrated below:

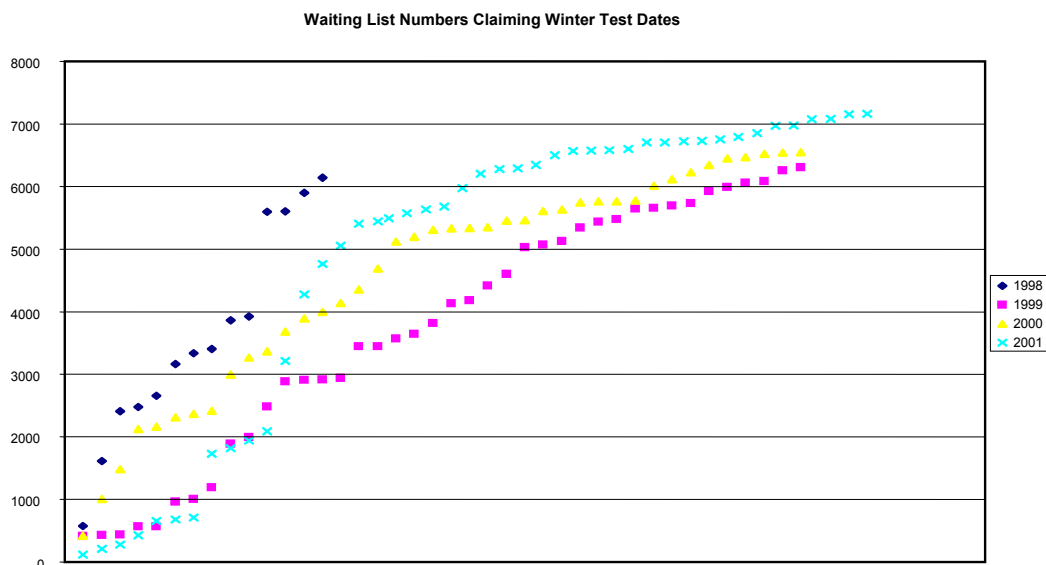
	1998	1999	2000	2001	<i>Total</i>
Range of Launch Dates Offered	12/12/98- 3/3/99	11/8/99- 3/15/00	11/13/00- 11/26/01	11/28/01- 3/20/02	12/12/98- 03/20/02
Offered How Far In Advance (in Months)	1-4	6-10	1-5 (+13)	6-10	1-13
Number of Launches Offered	27	40	42	44	153
Number of Launches Claimed	14	40	40	44	138
<i>Percentage of Launches Claimed</i>	52%	100%	95%	100%	90%

Whenever these winter launch dates were released to waitlist members at least 6 months in advance, all launches were claimed. The only times when waitlist members were not given at least 6 months notice was in 1998 and in 2000. During these years, some launches were released with only one month's notice. The challenges of putting together an 18-30 day river trip with so little notice resulted in 16 out of 69 launch dates going unclaimed. In 1998, the first year of the program, winter test dates were released 1-4 months in advance. Only about half the dates were claimed. Managers recognized that the short notice probably affected the demand for those launches. In 1999 all launch dates were released 6-10 months in advance, and all 40 launch dates were claimed. In fact, in the last three years of the program 98% of all winter test launch dates were claimed. The only two unclaimed launches were released with only a month's notice.

Launches were scheduled in November, December, January, February and March. During the final three years of the program approximately 40 launch dates were offered each winter. Although November and March dates typically were first to be claimed, all December-February dates were claimed as well (when potential permittees were given adequate notice). The park was able to release and schedule 44 additional launches in 2001.

## Who Claimed Launches?

Launch dates were made available to waitlist members through a call-in system that favored those who had been waiting longest. Dates were announced in advance by newsletter, emails, and a phone recording. Launch dates were initially released over the course of a week. On Monday those with waitlist numbers 1-1499 could call-in and claim dates, on Tuesdays 1-2999 could call, Wednesdays 1-3499 could call, Thursdays 1-4999 could call, and Fridays anyone on the waitlist could call (initially this was done in 1000 number increments, but it was increased for a more balanced distribution of waitlist numbers). Any launches unclaimed on Friday remained available through the call-in system until they were gone. Launches were scheduled by phone on a first-come, first-served basis, as long as the individual was eligible to call in on that day.



Over the four-years, people who claimed these winter launch dates had an average waitlist number of 4338. The lowest number was 118, the highest 7189. Individuals who claimed winter test launches had been on the list between 0 and 9 total years. The average wait works out to 2.86 years, or a median wait of 2 years. This compares to a wait of 9-20 years under initial scheduling (depending on when they joined the ever-

growing list). The distribution of waiting list numbers claiming dates is illustrated in the graph above.

Most of the permittees who obtained dates had been on the river before. 78% of those claiming dates reported to the river office that they had been on the river at least one other time. 19% reported that it was their first trip. Several did not provide us with this information. It is not clear how consistent this is with the remainder of the waiting list; those statistics are not readily available. The range in numbers of previous trips was dramatic. One individual reported 120 trips; others zero. Several individuals who reported high numbers of trips influence the average number of trips tremendously. The overall average number of trips was 6.74. The median, however, was 2. The number that showed up the most often was 1. These statistics were generated from numbers reported by permittees when they claimed their launches.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	<b><i>Total</i></b>
Number with Previous Trips	12	34	27	35	<b><i>108</i></b>
Percentage with Previous Trips	86%	85%	68%	80%	<b><i>78%</i></b>
Number did not Report	1	0	2	1	<b><i>4</i></b>
Number First Time Trips	1	6	11	8	<b><i>26</i></b>
Percentage First Time Trips	7%	15%	28%	18%	<b><i>19%</i></b>
Number Trips: High/ Low	110/0	120/0	32/0	18	<b><i>19</i></b>
Number of GC Trips: Average	17.77	5.9	3.59	7.21	<b><i>6.74</i></b>
Number of GC Trips: Median	2	1	1	2	<b><i>2</i></b>
Number of GC Trips: Mode	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<b><i>1</i></b>

The top ten states for winter scheduling reflected the top ten states on the waiting list overall. 38% of all launches were claimed by individuals in the 4 Colorado Plateau states (UT, AZ, CO, NM). 38.8% of the waiting list is composed of individuals in those same states. California and Arizona represent the only notable differences between the geography of the waiting list and of those claiming winter test dates. The number one state for waiting list participants is Colorado, with 20.13% of the total. Arizona stands

third with 8.55%. For those claiming winter launch dates, those roles are reversed. Arizona residents claimed 22% of winter test dates, while Colorado residents only claimed 5%. No clear reason for the discrepancy exists, although boaters in Colorado may have more interest in other winter activities, like skiing. Canada appears on the list in lieu of Idaho. Other than those two factors, the lists are similar. See below.

Waiting List Participants	Winter Test Participants (rounded to nearest whole number)
1. Colorado 20.13% 2. California 15.5% 3. Arizona 8.55% 4. Oregon 7.96% 5. Utah 7.12% 6. Washington 6.48% 7. Idaho 4.88% 8. Montana 3.35% 9. New Mexico 3.11% 10. Alaska 2.02% Top ten represent 79.1% of total.	1. Arizona 22% 2. California 13% 3. Oregon 8% 4. Utah 7% Washington 7% 6. Colorado 5% 7. Montana 4% New Mexico 4% 9. Alaska 4% Canada 4% Top ten represent 78% of total.

## Cancellation Rates

The cancellation rates for Winter Test Dates were lower than cancellation rates for permits obtained through the standard initial scheduling process. The overall cancellation rate was 14%. The cancellation rate was lowest during the first year, 1998, when trips were scheduled only 1-4 months in advance (7%). It was highest during the second year, 1999, when trips were scheduled 6-10 months in advance (23%). Remaining cancellation rates were 10% in 2000 and 16% in 2001. The trend seems to be that the further in advance trips are scheduled, the higher the cancellation rate. This is supported by the fact that trips scheduled through the initial scheduling process (1 ½- 2 years in advance) have a 20-40% cancellation rate.

Permittees that cancelled trips waited, on average, 2.09 years to obtain those trips. This is slightly less than the 2.86 years that the average permittee waited to obtain a trip. This may suggest that those who waited less time were more likely to cancel, but the difference is probably not significant enough to draw any major conclusions from that statistic. There is not enough information to draw accurate conclusions about geography and cancellations.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	4-Year Total	Initial Scheduling
# Dates Available	27	40	42	44	153	261 (average)
# Scheduled	14	40	40	44	138	All- eventually
Average Wait (years)	2.93	3.38	2.68	2.48	2.86	9-20
Advance Notice (months)	1-4	6-10	1-5 (&13)	6-10	1-13	16-27
Cancellation Rate	7%	23%	10%	16%	14%	~30%

### **Characteristics of Winter Trips**

Trips typically had fewer participants and were longer in length. Trips were allowed to have up to 16 passengers at one time. Maximum trip lengths allowed between Lees Ferry and Diamond Creek are (based on launch date): 21 days, October 16-November 30 and March 1-April 15; 30 days, December 1-February 29. Average trip length above includes trips that extended beyond Diamond Creek to Pearce Ferry. During the more popular primary season (April 16-October 15) trips are restricted to 18 days between Lee's Ferry and Diamond. In general, non-commercial permittees who launched during the winter season took advantage of the opportunity to take a longer trip during winter. The shortest trip was 7 days, the longest 36 days. The average trip length of 21.32 days (including the stretch from Diamond to Pearce) was slightly shorter than the overall secondary season trip length of 22.51 in 2001. Overall average number of passengers during the 2001 secondary season was 15. The number of passengers on winter test launches seemed to be smaller (10.81). The smallest trips launched with 1 passenger, the largest with 16. The greatest total number of participants on a single trip was 23 (via passenger exchanges. Shorter notice for winter launches and more solo trips may contribute to the smaller average number of passengers.

Of the 138 trips that launched, 18 were motor trips or had at least one motor on them. This equates to about 15% of the total number of trips. The other trips launched without any motor. 82 trips, or 70% of the total, took out at Diamond Creek. The remaining 35 trips (30%) took out at Pearce Ferry. Several of the last trips in winter 2001-2002 may have been forced down to South Cove. Pearce Ferry became unusable at some point that winter.

## **Conclusions**

From a visitor use standpoint, the winter test program was successful. All trips that were released with at least 6 months notice were claimed. This included the less popular months of December, January and February. Trips were claimed by people all over the country, from all levels on the waiting list, and with no Grand Canyon trips or many Grand Canyon trips. People willing to go in winter waited 2-3 years, on average (compared to 10 or more), to obtain a launch date. The cancellation rate, 14%, was lower than the average for the waiting list in its entirety. Demand clearly exists for an increased number of winter launches.